

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9103

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 NOUAKCHOTT 596

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AMGT, PFOR, MR

SUBJECT: US GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN MAURITANIA

REF: (A) 77 STATE 291277, (B) 77 STATE 295541

1. PURSUANT TO INSTRUCTIONS CONVEYED IN REFTEL A, THIS REPORT
IS SUBMITTED IN THREE PARTS: N A) BROAD APPROACHES BEING TAKEN TOWARD
ACHIEVING OUR GOALS AND
OBJECTIVES;

B) KEY POLICY ISSUES FACING THE US IN MARUITANIA, HOW PROJECTED
DEVELOPMENTS MAY AFFECT IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR OBJECTIVES AND
COURSES OF ACTION WE PROPOSE TO FOLLOW: AND

C) WHERE WE CURRENTLY STAND ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OBJECTIVES

2. BROAD APPROACHES:

THE LARGEST PART OF USG RESOURCES DESTINED FOR MAURITANIA WILL
CONTINUE TO BE ALLOCATED IN SUPPORT OF OUR BILATERAL AND
COORDINATED MULTILATERAL EFFORTS TO REVERSE THE DEVASTATING
EFFECTS OF THE SAHELIAN DROUGHT. THE RECURRENCE OF EXTREME
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DROUGHT CONDITIONS THIS YEAR HAS OCCASIONED A REORDERING OF
ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PRIORITIES. EMERGENCY
RELIEF HAS PERFORCE TAKEN PRECEDENCE OVER, BUT NOT NECESSARILY
DELAYED, THE LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS, BOTH BILATERAL
AND MULTILATERAL. THE RURAL ASSESSMENT MANPOWER STUDY (RAMS)
NOW HAS BEEN APPROVED AND WILL BE LAUNCHED SHORTLY.
THE PEACE CORPS RURALHEALTH PROGRAM IS

OFF TO AN EDDLELLENT START AND WE ARE NOBINOT ONLY FOCUSING ON EXPANDING OUR EFFORTS IN THE HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE SECTORS BUT ARE BRANCHING OUT INTO OTHER DEVELOPMENT SECTORS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD UPON THE CORDIAL POLITICAL RELATIONS THAT HAVE DEVELOPED IN RECENT YEARS BY MAINTAINING OPEN AND MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH ALL LEVELS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MAURITANIA (GIRM) INCLUDING PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH. WE ARE ENCOURAGING THE GIRM TO MAINTAIN ITS EVOLVING MODERATE STANCE ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND TO CONTINUE TO OPEN UP ITS ECONOMY TO PRIVATE INVESTMENT WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DISCOURAGING ANFXEFFORTS ON THEIR PART TO OBTAIN UFV INVOLVEMENT IN THE WESTERN SAHARA PROBLEM. WE ARE REDOUBLING OUR EFFORTS TO AWAKEN UNITED STATES PRIVATE SECTOR INTEREST IN SALES TO AND INVESTMENT IN MAURITANIA ENTERPRISES.

3. KEY POLICY ISSUES, HOW PROJECIED DEVELOPMENTS MAY AFFECT THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OSSOBJECTIVES, AND THE COURSES OF ACTION WE PROPOSE TO FOLLOW:

THE BROAD LINES OF US POLICY EXPRESSED IN REFTTEL B, ARE STILL ESSENTIALLY VALID. SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM EFFORT TO REVERSE THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF THE DROUGHT THAT HAS RAVAGED THE ENTIRE SAHEL, IS THE PRIMARY POLICY OBJECTIVE. OUR BILATERAL AS WELL AS REGIONAL AID PROGRAMS SHOULD CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE SAHEL. AT THE SAME TIME WE SHOULD EXPAND OUR EFFORTS, LARGELY THROUGH THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PEACE CORPS, TO ASSIST MAURITANIA IN IMPROVING HEALTH SERVICES NOT ONLY TO THE RURALPOOR BUT TO THE CITY DWELLERS AS WELL. IN THIS REGARD WE MUST BECOME INCREASINGLY AWARE THAT RAPID URBANIZATION, A RECENT PHENOMENON, IS CREATING A WHOLE NEW SET OF PROBLEMS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE POPULATION OF NOUAKCHOTT HAS INCREASED NEARLY TEN-TOLD IN THE PAST 5 YEARS. THUS A CITY WITH PLANNED FACILITIES FOR A POPULATION OF 20,000 FINDS ITSELF UNABLE TO MEET ADEQUATELY THE DEMANDS FOR ESSENTIAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES FOR 200,000 PEOPLE.

INVESTMENT AND TRADE PROMOTION SHOULD BE GIVEN HIGHER PRORITY. MAURITANIA IS A NATION WITH SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF HIGH GRADE IRON ORE PLUS UNDETERMINED AMOUNTS OF COPPER AND GYPSUM. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT URANIUM AND NICKEL IN EXPORTABLE QUANTITIES WILL PROBABLY BE LOCATED. OFFSHORE OIL EXPLORATION IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN SOON. MAURITANIA'S COASTAL WATERS ARE AMONG THE RICHEST FISHING GROUNDS IN THE WORLD. POTENTIAL US ACCESS TO THESE RESCOUCES CAN BEST BE OBTAINED BY EARLY PARTICIPATION IN THEIR EXPLOITATION. THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE MARKET FOR MINING EQUIPMENT AND LOW COST HOUSING.

THE MAJOR POLITICAL POLICY ISSUE STEMS FROM TENSIONS CREATED

BY THE ALGERIAN-SUPPORTED POLISARIO EFFORTS TO DESTABILIZE AND
PERHAPS BRING ABOUT THE EVENTUAL COLLAPSE OF THE PRESENT
MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH CLEAR GUIDELINES OF THE POLISARIO
FOREIGN POLICY HAVE NOT BEEN ENUNCIATED, IT IS EVIDENT THAT A
POLISARIO-CONTROLLED OR A PRO-POLISARIO GOVERNMENT IN NOUAKCHOTT
COULD BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT RADICAL POSITIONS IN THE THIRD WORLD
AND SPECIFICALLY THE SOCIALIST TRENDS OF ALGERIA AND LIBYA IN THE
ARAB WORLD. THE FRENCH INTERVENTION IN LATE 1977 BROUGHT ABOUT
A CHANGE IN POLISARIO TACTICFFAROM THE BROAD SWEEPING ATTACKS ON
THE RAILROAD OR EVEN MAJOR CITIES SUCH AS NOUAKCHOTT AND NOUADHIBOU
TO ACTS OF SABOTAGE ESPECIALLY AGAINST THE RAILROAD, LINKING
ZOUERATE AND NOUADHIBOU, WHICH TRANSPORTS THE IRON ORE THAT
VICCOUNTS FOR 80PCT OF MAURITANIA'S EXPORT RECEIPTS. IF THE MARCHR
12 AND 19 ELECTIONS IN FRANCE PRODUCE A LEFTIST GOVERNMENT THAT
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HONORS ITS CAMPAIGN POMISES OF NON-INTERVENTION IN AFRICA, THE
POLISARIO WILL NO DOUBT BE EMBOLDENED TO REVERT TO ITS PRE-
DECEMBER 1977 TACTICS, UNLESS MOROCCO AND/OR MAURITANIA CAN
FIND A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE AIR COVER NOW PROVIDED BY FRANCE.

THE GIRM, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER, IS
FULLY COGNIZANT OF USG POLICY WITH REGARD TO THE MOROCCAN/
MAURITANIAN ADMINISTRATION OF THE WESTERN SAHARA, BUT MAURITANIANS
NEITHER UNDERSTAND IT NOR AGREE WITH IT. THEY ARE OPENLY CON-
CERNED THAT THE USG DOES NOT APPRECIATE THE GRAVITY AND

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IMMEDIACY OF THE THREAT TO MAURITANIAN NATIONAL SOVREIGNTY AS A RESULT OF RUSSIAN-BACKED ALGERIAN AGGRESSION (SEE 77 NOUAKCHOTT 2936 AND NOUAKCHOTT 0083). MAURITANIA CONSIDERS ITSELF AS A NATION WHICH INCLUDES SAHARANS AND VIEWS THE POLISARIO AS AN INTERNAL THREAT FINANCED, CONTROLLED AND ASSISTED BY OUTSIDE FORCES. THE RECENT WIDELY PUBLICIZED ADMINISTRATION DISCUSSIONS WITH CONGRESS REGARDING AN EXPANSION OF SALES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO MOROCCO WHICH WAS THEN WITHDRAWN IN LATE FEBRUARY, MERELY SERVED TO ADD TO THE GIRM'S CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY ABOUT WHERE WE STAND. MEANWHILE THEY SEE THE SOVIET UNION, ALGERIA AND LIBYA OPENLY PROVISIONING THE POLISARIO WITH MODERN WEAPONS FOR USE AGAINST MAURITANIA. ALTHOUGH THE US CAN AND SHOULD AVOID PUBLIC POSITIONS ON WHAT IS IN ESSENCE A TERRITORIAL DISPUTE BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA (AND IN WHICH MAURITANIA HAS NOTHING TO GAIN BUT CONTROL OF AN ADDITIONAL 34,000 SQUARE MILES OF DESERT) AND ALTHOUGH THE USG SHOULD NOT AND PROBABLY COULD NOT PLAY A MEDIATING ROLE OR BECOME A LEADING SUPPLIER OF ARMS TO ANY OF THE COMBATANTS, WE NEED NOT ADHERE TO A RIGID STAND AGAINST THE LIMITED SALE OF SPECIFIED MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO MOROCCO FOR USE IN STABILIZING THE SITUATION IN MAURITANIA. ALBEIT, BY DEFAULT AS A RESULT OF ALGERIAN BELLIGERENCY, CONFIDENTIAL

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MAURITANIA HAS CLEARLY MOVED INTO THE MODERATE CAMP. IF THE US DESIRES TO ENCOURAGE MODERACY IN AFRICA, AMONG NATIONS WHO BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS GRAND DESIGNS TO ESTABLISH PREDOMINANT INFLUENCE IN THE CONTINENT, AND WHO SEE THEIR SOVEREIGNTY THREATENED, THEN WE SHOULD CONSIDER MORE OPEN SUPPORT FOR MAURITANIA IN ITS STRUGGLE.

4. WHERE THE MISSION STANDS CURRENTLY ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OBJECTIVES:

THE FOLLOWING STATUS REPORT IS KEYED TO THE OUTLINE CONTAINED IN PARAGRAPH 2 OF REFTEL ?.

I. PROGRESS TOWARD BROAD-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

--TO DATE AID HAS PROVIDED 5000 MT OF SORGHUM TO THE GIRM THROUGH THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM AND HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO ANOTHER 10,000 MT OF GRAIN ON A BILATERAL BASIS. AID WILL ALSO PROVIDE A CASH GRANT FOR THE INITIAL TRANSPORTATION OF THIS FOOD, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THE AMOUNT IS INSUFFICIENT AND HAVE REQUESTED AN INCREASE (NOUAKCHOTT 473). AID IS ALSO CONSIDERING PROVIDING BETWEEN 5000-10,000 MT OF ANIMAL FOOD. A RECENT ASSESSMENT OF THE DROUGHT SITUATION INDICATES THAT IT MAY BE EVEN MORE SERIOUS THAN EVERYONE CONCERNED BELIEVED. THIS AND THE DECISION TO PROVIDE

ANIMAL FEED AND ASSISTANCE TO PROVIDE INLAND TRANSPORTATION LED TO OUR RECENT REQUEST (NOUAKCHOTT 508) TO ESTABLISH AND STAFF AN EMERGENCY DROUGHT OFFICE. AID HAS PROVIDED ONE EXPERT TO PARTICIPATE ON A MULTI-DONOR MISSION TO FURTHER ASSESS THE DROUGHT SITUATION AND RECOMMEND REMEDIAL ACTION.

-- WE HAVE PROPOSED A PROJECT WHICH WOULD GUARANTEE FOOD REQUIREMENTS TO MAURITANIA OVER A 5-YEAR PERIOD, ASSIST THE MAURITANIAN CEREALS OFFICE IN MANAGING FOOD PURCHASES AND SALES AND PROVIDE SUFFICIENT TRANSPORT AND WAREHOUSE FACILITIES
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FOR EFFICIENT DISTRIBUTION. THIS PROJECT, WHICH WILL REQUIRE THE COOPERATION OF OTHER DONORS, IS PLANNED FOR IMPLEMENTATION BEGINNING FY-79, SUBJECT TO GIRM AND OTHER DONOR CONCURRENCES. AID HAS RECENTLY SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH GIRM TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE NEW, MORE EFFICIENT TECHNIQUES OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND FARMING. OTHER PROJECTS WHICH ADDRESS THEMSELVES TO IMPROVING THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION INCLUDE ASSISTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OASIS AGRICULTURE, DEVELOPMENT OF DRY LAND FARMING OF TRADITIONAL CROPS AND ASSISTANCE IN VEGETABLE PRODUCTION. THESE PROJECTS ARE ALL SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN FY-78 OR FY-79. THE FOREGOING PROJECTS ALSO HAVE AN IMPORTANT IMPACT ON STEMMING AND REVERSING THE PRESENT TREND WHEREBY THE ENVIRONMENT OF MAURITANIA (WILD LIFE, UNDERGROUND WATER, GRASS LAND, ETC.) IS RAPIDLY DETERIORATING. ADDITIONALLY, IN THIS REGARD, AID, HOWEVER, IS CURRENTLY WORKING WITH THE GIRM ON A PROJECT THAT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSES ITSELF TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE. THE PROJECT WHICH CALLS FOR SAND DUNE STABILIZATION, RESERVE PASTURAGE AND REFORESTATION, IS EXPECTED TO BE MOUNTED IN FY-79. THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN LONG RANGE PLANNING IS COVERED IN NOUAKCHOTT 584.

-- THE PEACE CORPS NOW HAS 8 VOLUNTEERS INVOLVED IN HEALTH SERVICES TO THE RURAL POOR. APPROVAL IS BEING SOUGHT FOR THE ADDITION OF FOUR MORE HEALTH SPECIALISTS AND 14 VOLUNTEERS FOR A RURAL VEGETABLE GROWING PROJECT. PLANS ARE ALSO BEING MADE TO EXPAND TO OTHER FIELDS OF DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING THE TEACHING OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS WHICH WE CONSIDER TO BE ESSENTIAL IN THIS COUNTRY.

-- THE AID MISSION HAS PLANS TO MOUNT A COMPREHENSIVE SERIES OF STUDIES WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE GIRM AT BOTH THE MINISTERIAL AND WORKING LEVELS THAT ARE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST ALL LEVELS OF THE GIRM TO LOOK UPON ECONOMIC/SOCIAL/POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AS AN INTEGRATED, CONTINUING PROCESS RATHER THAN A SERIES OF SEPARATE UNCONNECTED PROJECTS. THE RURAL ASSESSMENT
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STUDY (RAMS) PROJECT HAS NOW RECEIVED CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION AND IS EXPECTED TO BEGIN IN FY-78. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS WILL ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POLITICAL WILL TO MODERNIZATION WHICH IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF A DEVELOPING COUNTRY.

II. GREATER REGIONAL COOPERATION, ESPECIALLY ON ECONOMIC MATTERS. ALMOST ALL OF THE AID INTERVENTIONS DISCUSSED ABOVE REFLECT INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE GIRM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLUB DES AMIS DU SAHEL. WHILE THE GIRM HAS NOT YET ESTABLISHED AN IN-COUNTRY FRAMEWORK BY WHICH CILSS-ORIENTED DISCUSSIONS CAN TAKE PLACE, THIS IS EXPECTED TO BE DONE SOON. THE AID MISSION HAS ENCOURAGED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH A FRAMEWORK AND WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH IT WHEN IT IS FORMALLY ESTABLISHED. ALSO WITH REGARD TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AID IS SUPPORTING EFFORTS OF

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OMVS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, MOST PARTICULARLY IN MAURITANIA BY PREPARING A PROJECT WHICH WILL ASSIST MAURITANIAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH IN THE SENEGAL RIVER VALLEY. THIS PROJECT IS EXPECTED TO GET UNDERWAY NEXT FISCAL YEAR. ON MORE GENERALIZED ASPECTS, AID IS ASSISTING OMVS IN AERIAL MAPPING AND PHOTOGRAPHY AND IN ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS THAT AFFECT THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SENEGAL RIVER VALLEY. THE GIRM IS COMMITTED TO THE EXPANSION AND GROWTH OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS, AND HAS BEEN AN

ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN CEA0 AND ECOWAS MEETINGS.

III. EXPANSION OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT:

THE RECENT MULTI-DONOR AGREEMENT IN PARIS TO PROVIDE 360 MILLION DOLLARS IN EXTERNAL CREDIT TO FINANCE THE EXPANSION OF MAURITANIA'S IRON ORE INDUSTRY, (THE SO-CALLED GUELBS PROJECT) AND THE GIRM'S JANUARY 25 DECISION TO RETURN TO A MIXED MARKET ECONOMY, PROVIDES EXPANDED OPPORTUNITY FOR US FIRMS TO INVEST AND SELL IN THE MINING SECTOR. AS INDICATED IN NOUAKCHOTT 255, 296, AND 482, MAURITANIA IS OPENLY COURTING FOREIGN INVESTMENT. WE HAVE ENCOURAGED A MORE AGGRESSIVE TRADE PROMOTION POSTURE AND ARE SEEKING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN SUCH AREAS AS LOW-COST HOUSING (TO HELP ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEMS OF RAPID URBANIZATION) CONFIDENTIAL

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AND IN MODERNIZATION OF MAURITANIA'S AIR SERVICE. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF ANY AFRICAN FIRM BEING DISADVANTAGED BY THE GIRM'S TRADE POLICIES WE WILL CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE THE GIRM TO PROVIDE THE SAME TERMS TO US EXPORTERS AS ARE GIVEN TO EEC NATIONS (AS SIGNATORIES TO THE LOME CONVENTION). THE GIRM IS ACTIVELY SEEKING THE PARTICIPATION OF US FIRMS IN MARINE FISHING AND IN FURTHER EXPLOITATION OF MINING POTENTIAL.

IV. COMMUNICATION OF US VIEWS ON WESTERN SAHARA:

THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON THIS SUBJECT IS CONTAINED IN NOUAKCHOTT 0083. AS INDICATED IN THE FOREGOING, THE ADMINISTRATION DISCUSSIONS WITH CONGRESS TO SELL OV-10 AIRCRAFT AND COBRA HELICOPTERS TO MOROCCO WAS INTERPRETED AS AN ENCOURAGING SIGNAL FROM THE USG. THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED DECISION NOT TO SUBMIT THE REQUEST HAS CREATED DOUBT AND MISUNDERSTANDING.

V. IMPROVE BILATERAL COOPERATION ON GLOBAL ISSUES:

WITH THE ARRIVAL IN FY-78 OF A FULL TIME PAO THE EMBASSY WILL BEGIN TO EXPAND ITS PUBLIC DIPLOMACY EFFORTS. USIS HAS ALSO APPROVED AN ENLARGEMENT OF THE USIS FSL STAFF FROM ONE TO THREE. THE EMBASSY HAS SUBMITTED PLANS FOR A CULTURAL CENTER/USIS OFFICE (SEE NOUAKCHOTT 123). GIRM OFFICIALS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AWAIT THIS EXPANSION OF ACTIVITY AND HAVE MADE FREQUENT INQUIRIES AS REGARDS INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS. MAURITANIAN INTEREST IN THE US HAS MARKEDLY INCREASED DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS AS MAURITANIA HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT PERCEIVES THAT ITS FUTURE LIES WITH THE WESTERN POWERS AND THE MORE MODERATE AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN NATIONS. WHILE IT HAS NOT PUBLICLY TERMINATED ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE "PROGRESSIVES" AND "SOCIALISTS" OF THE THIRD WORLD (EXCEPT ALGERIA AND NORTH KOREA), IT HAS CLEARLY MOVED TOWARD THE POSITIONS OF THE "MODERATE" ARAB AND AFRICAN NATIONS. IT HAS OPENLY REQUESTED ECONOMIC AND CONFIDENTIAL

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MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM FRANCE AND HAS PUBLICLY PRAISED FRENCH ASSISTANCE IN ASSISTING MAURITANIA TO COMBAT "RUSSIAN-BACKED ALGERIAN AGGRESSION". ITS OPPOSITION, ALONG WITH MOROCCO, TO THE FEBRUARY 1978 TRIPOLI OAU RESOLUTION ON THE CANARY ISLANDS IS ONE EXAMPLE OF A FOREIGN POLICY INCREASINGLY CONSISTENT WITH ITS TWO CLOSEST NEIGHBORS, MOROCCO AND SENEGAL. THIS DOES NOT MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT IT WILL NOT CONTINUE ITS LONG HISTORICAL TIES AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH "PROGRESSIVES" AND OTHERS (NOTABLY THE PRC) AND THUS MAINTAIN ITS CREDENTIALS IN THE THIRD WORLD MOVEMENT. MAURITANIA HAS INDICATED THAT IT IS AMENABLE TO SUPPORTING US POSITIONS ON THIRD WORLD ISSUES, BUT IN ITS VIEW THE USG SHOULD ON ITS PART CLARIFY AND PRIORITIZE THE ISSUES IT CONSIDERS VITALLY IMPORTANT (MID EAST, THE HORN, SOUTHERN AFRICA ETC.) AND SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT ALGERIAN-BACKED AGGRESSION CONSTITUTES A REAL THREAT AGAINST THE NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY OF MAURITANIA.

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